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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": Implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

Chairs' summary

1. On 16 and 17 March 2017, in a series of interactive dialogues, the Commission on the Status of Women evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the priority theme of its fifty-eighth session, namely, the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls (see E/CN.6/2014/3). The Vice-Chairs of the Commission, Sejla Durbuzovic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Jun Saito (Japan), chaired those interactive dialogues.

2. As part of the review, the following 11 Member States presented information, on a voluntary basis, on lessons learned and challenges faced and identified best practices and means for accelerated programme implementation through national and regional efforts: Bulgaria, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Liberia, Malta, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Slovakia, Spain and the United Republic of Tanzania. Those presentations were followed by responses from Member States that had partnered with those mentioned above. Those partners, respectively, included Argentina and Germany, Canada and Norway, Portugal and Uruguay, Albania and Poland, Namibia and Zimbabwe, Australia and Canada, Switzerland and Japan, Belgium, Germany and the Republic of Korea, Austria and Kazakhstan, and Morocco and Colombia.

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3. The opening remarks of the Vice-Chairs and the introductory statement of the Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Lakshmi Puri, drew attention to the review in relation to the early stages of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. That made it possible to assess the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals from a gender perspective in relation to actions taken by Member States to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. They acknowledged the significant influence of the agreed conclusions on the global normative framework, in particular the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They highlighted the opportunity to build on the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goal process for the accelerated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for women and girls.

4. Presenting Member States focused on the action areas of the agreed conclusions, which were highly relevant to the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. All presenting countries affirmed that the full realization of the human rights of women and girls was vital to achieving progress across the Sustainable Development Goals, that challenges and gaps remained and that more comprehensive action was needed to achieve substantive equality. Many noted that, in addition to having constitutional prohibitions against gender discrimination, legal reforms continued to be implemented to address ongoing discrimination, in particular with respect to violence against women, access to justice and women's labour and economic rights. For example, Malta had added provisions on sexual orientation and gender identity to the anti-discrimination article in its Constitution in 2014 and subsequently had adopted a related bipartisan act.

6. Countries reported on the strengthening of existing legislation and the introduction of new gender equality legislation and improvements made to enforcement in line with international commitments. Bulgaria, for example, had adopted a new law on equality between men and women in 2016 to correspond with European Union and other international standards. It also had established an intergovernmental working group and had held civil society consultations to enhance the implementation of both the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Liberia had taken measures to improve law enforcement and align with regional efforts by launching a new campaign to end child marriage, in line with the related campaign of the African Union.

7. Presenting countries had prioritized programmatic measures to address multiple forms of discrimination experienced by specific groups. For example, Bulgarian civil society organizations were collaborating with the Government to integrate service provision with action to respond to violence against women from vulnerable groups, including ethnic women and women with disabilities. Mexico had identified ways to address challenges in linking human rights and the pluricultural rights of indigenous peoples. Civil society groups, with government support, had established a human rights training institute to educate justice experts across the region on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other human rights treaties that underpinned the realization of the human rights of women and girls.

8. Countries noted that creating an enabling environment through gender sensitive approaches to policies and programmes was crucial to advancing gender equality. Many had implemented gender mainstreaming as a key strategy across a broad range of policy areas. Mexico noted that the gender mainstreaming approach

had bolstered the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and set the stage for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Indonesia had built a gender mainstreaming approach into its national and regional development plans to accelerate action to achieve gender equality and to implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. Presenting countries discussed measures to achieve work-life balance. Maternity leave policies, care services and flexible work arrangements had enabled women to continue employment throughout motherhood. Malta had set up a maternity leave trust fund to ensure that women were reimbursed for leave taken. The Labour Code of Slovakia included provisions for flexible forms of employment, thereby allowing greater work-life balance for women.

10. Important progress had been made in implementing broad strategies and national action plans on gender equality, along with specific legislation to focus on certain priority areas. In 2002, Mongolia had adopted a national programme for gender equality to accelerate action on the gender-specific commitments in the Millennium Development Goals and had adopted laws on domestic violence, trafficking and women's political participation. Looking forward to 2030, the Dominican Republic had launched its national development strategy for Sustainable Development Goal implementation, which had incorporated a gender perspective in the design and management of public policies. Effective cross-sectoral coordination between its relevant ministries was considered key for the strategy's successful implementation.

11. Many presentations highlighted increased investments in gender equality and Millennium Development Goal implementation, including through gender-responsive budgeting. Morocco shared the success of its efforts to mainstream gender perspectives across the budgets of all programmes, through its Ministry of Finance, and the success of its Centre of Excellence in supervising the effective implementation of the process. The Dominican Republic presented information on its financing for equality and resource allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment in specific programme categories and in the budgets of each ministry.

12. Limited resources dedicated to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls emerged as a key challenge over the past decade. With the more ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the need to mobilize adequate resources for implementation was even more pressing. Participants gave examples of the mobilization of resources for gender equality and the empowerment of women, both internationally, through official development assistance, and through domestic channels. For example, Spain discussed its fund for the realization of Millennium Development Goal 3. The fund had supported many of the initiatives of United Nations entities and bilateral programmes in partner countries that had been implemented by Spanish and international civil society partners. The United Republic of Tanzania had mobilized local resources through a women's development fund for business activities and capacity-building.

13. Some countries had implemented capacity-building initiatives as investments toward achieving gender equality. Liberia had promoted women's economic empowerment by investing in training and capacity-building through a project that had provided livelihood and life skills training to young women in order to facilitate their transition to productive work. The United Republic of Tanzania had enhanced access to health insurance by increasing community health funds and introducing supplementary schemes for the informal sector, which were expected to increase coverage to about 40 per cent of the population by 2020.

14. Countries had improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at the national and local levels and stepped up data collection efforts. Statistical capacity-building

activities had been prioritized by most participants. Spain had strengthened gender mainstreaming in its statistics projects. Several other countries had integrated the development and improvement of gender statistics into development plans or established relevant ministerial commissions and units. For example, the United Republic of Tanzania had collaborated with United Nations entities and other development partners to localize and harmonize gender indicators with existing national plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

15. Participants underscored the role of national statistical offices and other data producers in monitoring progress in achieving gender equality and sustainable development. For example, Mongolia and the Dominican Republic were using online portals to transparently monitoring progress with respect to the Millennium Development Goals.

16. Countries were developing and enhancing standards and methodologies to more effectively measure progress in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women. Mexico had expanded steps to enhance gender statistics and improve its data localization system. Some countries had commenced national initiatives to develop metadata for selected indicators. Indonesia highlighted the need for Sustainable Development Goal indicators to be accompanied by guidance on concepts and definitions, methodology, data resources, disaggregation and frequency of data collection. Morocco emphasized the critical importance of disaggregated data. Mongolia and Liberia pointed to data gaps on unpaid care and domestic work and violence against women, in particular at the local level.

17. Many countries were prioritizing the strengthening of evidence. Mongolia and Indonesia, for example, reported on efforts to assess data gaps, improve data collection, conduct baseline surveys for indicators with no baseline data, report on gender indicators, develop new methodologies in line with international standards and cooperate with data partners within their national statistical systems.

18. Participants acknowledged the existence of implementation gaps and ongoing challenges regarding the data demands of the new development agenda. Partnerships, in particular with civil society organizations, were widely identified as critical to strengthening monitoring efforts and improving public access to information through regular reporting.

19. Presenting countries acknowledged that women's participation in political decision-making remained uneven. Noting the underrepresentation of women at decision-making levels, countries confirmed their commitment to greater participation by women. For example, Bulgaria and Mexico reported a steady increase in the role of women in political life. Bulgaria reported an increase in women's participation on the executive boards of large companies and in the membership and management of non-governmental and human rights organizations.

20. Some countries had revised their election laws and established gender quotas for political party candidates for all levels of public administrative institutions and local government bodies, and at decision-making levels in enterprises. In Mongolia, all government agencies had been required to submit annual reports on quota implementation, and women in parliament had formed a Women's Caucus to promote gender equality.

21. Countries underscored their commitments to increasing the presence of women in decision-making positions through means beyond quotas. Next steps for countries such as Malta and Mongolia included training women for leadership positions, establishing indicators for use in monitoring and the gender auditing of political party policies and activities.

22. Looking forward to 2030, it was widely agreed that collaborative approaches would be most effective in making progress in securing women's social protection and their labour and economic rights and in making measurable progress with respect to their participation in politics and decision-making.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work

Interactive expert panel: the global care economy in the context of the changing world of work

Chair's summary

1. On 17 March 2017, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive expert panel on the topic "The global care economy in the context of the changing world of work", under the priority theme "Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work". The Vice-Chair of the Commission, Šejla Đurbuzović (Bosnia and Herzegovina), moderated the discussion.

2. The expert panellists were: Emeritus Professor in the Department of Sociology at Essex University, Diane Elson, presenting on behalf of Emeritus Professor at the Open University, Susan Himmelweit; General Secretary of the National Union of Domestic Employees in Trinidad and Tobago, Ida Le Blanc; Professor of Sociology and Public Policy at the University of Toronto, Ito Peng; Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Population Studies of the University of Zimbabwe, Naomi Wekwete; Director of the Department on Conditions of Work and Equality of the International Labour Organization, Manuela Tomei; and Adviser to the Director of the National Care Secretariat of the Ministry of Social Development of Uruguay, Patricia Cossani. Representatives of four Member States, one regional organization and three civil society organizations engaged in the discussion with the panellists.

3. The care economy covers both paid and unpaid care and domestic work. Participants noted that women and girls bear a disproportionate share of such work and that women work longer hours than men globally. Changes are therefore

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required in the care economy in order to address gender inequalities. Participants provided examples of policies and laws aimed at investing in the care economy, improving the quality of care, securing decent work conditions for care workers and supporting the participation of women in the labour force.

Global trends

4. Demand for care is growing. Demographic changes across the world, including a growing and ageing population, with a projected 2 billion ageing persons by 2050 and a sizeable youth population entering child-bearing age, are expected to result in increased global demand for care work, which already faces a deficit of 13.6 million care workers. A significant portion of the jobs of the future will be in the care economy.

5. Participants noted that the growing demand for paid care services has not been met by the public sector, and the private and informal sectors have stepped in to fill those gaps. The migration of care workers is a partial response to meet the increased demand for care. It is critical for the public sector to invest in care systems in order to meet the demand and to regulate care services in a way that will ensure a high quality of care, secure decent work conditions and fair wages.

Gender perspectives in paid and unpaid care work

6. Participants noted that workers in the formal and informal care economies are disproportionately female. Care workers often lack recognition and respect, receive low pay and are subject to insecure employment arrangements, characterized by a lack of employment contracts and contributions to national insurance schemes. Many face abusive work conditions, including sexual and gender-based violence, and dismissal for joining a union or becoming pregnant. The lack of social protection and labour rights for workers in the care economy constitutes a challenge for the economic empowerment of women.

7. Domestic workers make up a significant portion of care workers around the world. There are 67 million domestic workers over the age of 15, 80 per cent of which are women. Worldwide, 1 in 25 women workers is a domestic worker, and almost 1 in 6 domestic workers is an international migrant. Migrant domestic workers are some of the most vulnerable workers.

8. Participants noted that women and girls shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, including caregiving responsibilities and household chores within their communities. In one region, two thirds of primary caregivers in households are female. In some rural contexts, women spend nine hours per week collecting water and fire wood, compared with one hour spent by men. Social, economic and health challenges arising from poverty, poor infrastructure and public services, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and recurrent droughts can increase the workload of women.

9. Participants noted that, even when women are employed in the formal economy, they are expected to shoulder the burden of household chores and care work. In some countries, notwithstanding policy and legislative changes aimed at improving gender equality and supporting working women, the bulk of care work still falls on women.

10. The provision and availability of well-regulated and quality care services frees up the time women usually invest in providing care, either to children or the elderly. Although women are able to commit more time to their professional lives by employing care workers, the externalization of care responsibilities does not automatically promote gender equality or encourage men to assume care responsibilities.

11. Participants highlighted the need for intersectional analysis in considering the multiple layers of discrimination that require attention in order to adequately address the needs and rights of caregivers, including those of older women who are often caretakers of multiple generations and young girls who shoulder a greater portion of household chores within the family.

The way forward

12. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlight the importance of paid and unpaid care work and the need to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work. To achieve the goals set out therein, participants called upon Governments and all relevant stakeholders to strengthen normative and legal frameworks for full and productive employment and decent work for all women. Participants also called for the ratification without reservations and the full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

13. Both sending and receiving countries have critical roles to play in protecting the rights of migrant domestic workers, including through the ratification and implementation at the national level of the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), of ILO.

14. It is critical for Governments to invest in the care economy as a shared social responsibility, to regulate care work and to provide care services through the public sector in support of gender equality.

15. Legislative and policy measures need to be complemented by efforts to bring about changes in attitudes and challenge gender stereotypes and social norms. A holistic approach is needed, working at the grass-roots level, with traditional and local leaders, to encourage men to take on shared responsibilities for care work in a more equitable manner within households and communities.